

To Research by Two Hands

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Abstract

In this article, we explore artistic research methods by committing ourselves to writing in a sense Cixous is thematizing in her book *Three Steps to the Ladder of Writing*: a way of writing that includes what is banished, considered unclean, the mute and the missing, and by including drawing in the attempt.

Our article's starting point is our experiences working with and producing conventional and publishable academic texts. Our experiences have, in ways that still are not transparent to us, made the transition towards achieving the right skills for producing orthodox academic texts more complicated and hurtful than we could imagine. The desired language, the academic, is a language created to represent reality in transparent ways; you are expected to be able to present the world as a series of findings. Our writing and drawing as creations are contrary to this reduction.

The text and the drawings attempt to demonstrate and discuss the possibilities of engaging in writing and drawing as production on its own terms and stop regarding them as activities that mirror what already is. Instead, we aim to experiment and thus

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maybe create something that was not already there, something new, something that might be missing.

Keywords: artistic research, drawing, writing

Introduction

This article is the result of a collaboration between two people with different experiences and interests. However, both are researchers and have a shared history of being former PhD students in the same PhD programme. In the sections we have written together, we reflect on being academics and on having to deliver results in specific formats. Other sections are written by us as individuals, as Vibeke, as Geir. These sections are responses to an ongoing conversation. Vibeke draws, writes, Geir writes a response, a reaction, and formulates new questions, and problems. The conversations between us made us remember things we thought we had forgotten. To expose oneself to one another means to expose oneself to the world in new ways. Vibeke has photographed, drawn, created the visual elements in this article. Geir's words cannot be imagined without Vibeke's visual works. Vibeke's visual work would have been different without our conversations. Vibeke's parts begin with 'Vibeke: ', Geir's parts with 'Geir: '

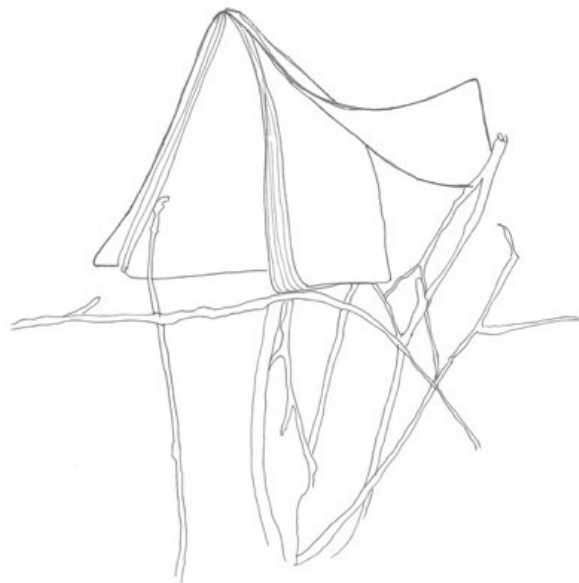


Figure 1. Drawing (no title). Vibeke Sjøvoll (2021)

Vibeke: *My denials are thinner than me.*

My drawings have changed over the years; faint, thin lines. I have two on my wall now, they are scarcely visible, I must draw closer to see, to decipher – the lines are so thin. Two white frames, with semi-transparent tracing paper. When the light from the window shines on the glass, it is impossible to see anything at all; even in the best light conditions the lines are barely noticeable. The walls are greyish green, the afternoon sun makes them glow. I didn't realise how thin the lines are, how humble and careful and how almost invisible my attempts have become.

Hélène Cixous wants to liberate the individual from the tyranny of rationality and liberate women from the image of 'woman' in our culture (Lie, p.2). I am not sure what I am, who I am, what image I must be liberated from. I am a woman. I live in the world.



Figure 2. Landscape from the north. Photo with drawing. Vibeke Sjøvoll (2009/2021).

Geir: A boy from the north.

As a boy I spoke with a dialect from northern Norway. We moved south when I was five years old. As children we had nothing to say, we were moved. It was in 1970. I cannot remember the sound of the words I used before I was moved. I have asked my mother how I sounded, what words I used. We moved to the suburbs of Oslo. The people there talked like they did on the radio, on TV. I did not think that. I cannot remember what I thought. My father is from the north. My mother is from everywhere;

she spent her childhood in the western parts of Norway, the northern, the south-eastern, the US. The spoken words of my father told the world where he came from, the sound of him made him a man from the north. The sound of my mother did not offer sure clues to anything. She was shy, soft-spoken, still is. Many of the men from the north, the women too, tried to get rid of their dialects then. People from the north were considered to be different. To get rid of one's dialect is a hopeless task for adults, it is almost impossible to change the tones, the melody, the prosody of a person's voice.

It only took me a few weeks to leave my dialect behind. My mother tells me this. My brain was still evolving, plastic, adaptable. My voice was thin, tentative, open. I must have wanted to sound like them. For some years now, I have come to wonder about the process of losing a dialect, a way of talking, thinking a sound and replacing it with another, the proper one. What was eradicated first? The first-person pronoun? From 'æ' ('I') to 'jeg' ('I')? I don't know. Maybe. I was trying to sound like them. Why not start with the first-person pronoun? 'Jeg'. 'I'. How long did it take to eradicate even the smallest traces of the north, the melodies, the tones? Did I ever get to a point where I thought I finally sounded like them?

No one from the north can hear that I am one of them.

A structure: To drift away from life as we were about to know of it

In our article, we try to explore artistic research method by committing ourselves to write in the sense Cixous thematises in her book *Three Steps to the Ladder of Writing*, a way of writing that includes that which is banished, considered unclean, the mute and the missing. Our texts are mongrels.

We do not have time to do what we want. We must work, teach, raise children, do normal things; go on holiday, work out, eat, read newspapers, books, encounter art, walk through woods, talk with friends, bosses and financial institutions, ride our bikes, pay bills, log in, log out. We are enmeshed in the normal. Conformity is extremely time consuming. Especially if you want to achieve something, be someone. We are not free from such desires. We had to compromise; we were not able to direct our writing towards a future. We had to withdraw, write about the already experienced, the lost. We have both been writing on our doctoral theses The writing of a thesis had

disturbing effects on both of us. We write about our lives as former PhD students, as academics. We write about things that are connected to this. Vibeke writes what she writes. Geir does too. That is the structure. We have been together throughout the whole ordeal.

Our experiences have, in ways that still are not transparent to us, made the transition to achieving the right skills for producing orthodox academic texts more complicated and hurtful than we could imagine. To obtain the obligatory language, you must abandon your way of writing, get rid of it. The desired language is a language created to represent reality in certain ways; you are expected to be able to present the world as a series of findings. Writing as creation is counter to this kind of reduction.

We had – before we became academics – been working in artistic ways: Vibeke as a visual artist, Geir as a writer. It is not that we have stopped writing and drawing. Our writing and drawing went underground, became a private activity, something that took place in note pads, notebooks, on random pieces of paper, napkins. The writing and drawing became something unofficial, a shadow-like, secret companion, something embarrassing, like habits that are not fashionable: smoking, eating fast food or sugar. Our writings and drawings were kept hidden, as if we were ashamed of them. Our obligation to engage in the pursuit of the goals of our institutions made it obvious to us that to continue to write and draw would place us on the outside of the playing field. A student told Vibeke, in fact a whole class told her, about a message they remembered only too well – it was about drawing: ‘Your lines have to be confident, fast, elegant – no fussy lines are allowed here’ (Sjøvoll et al. 2020).

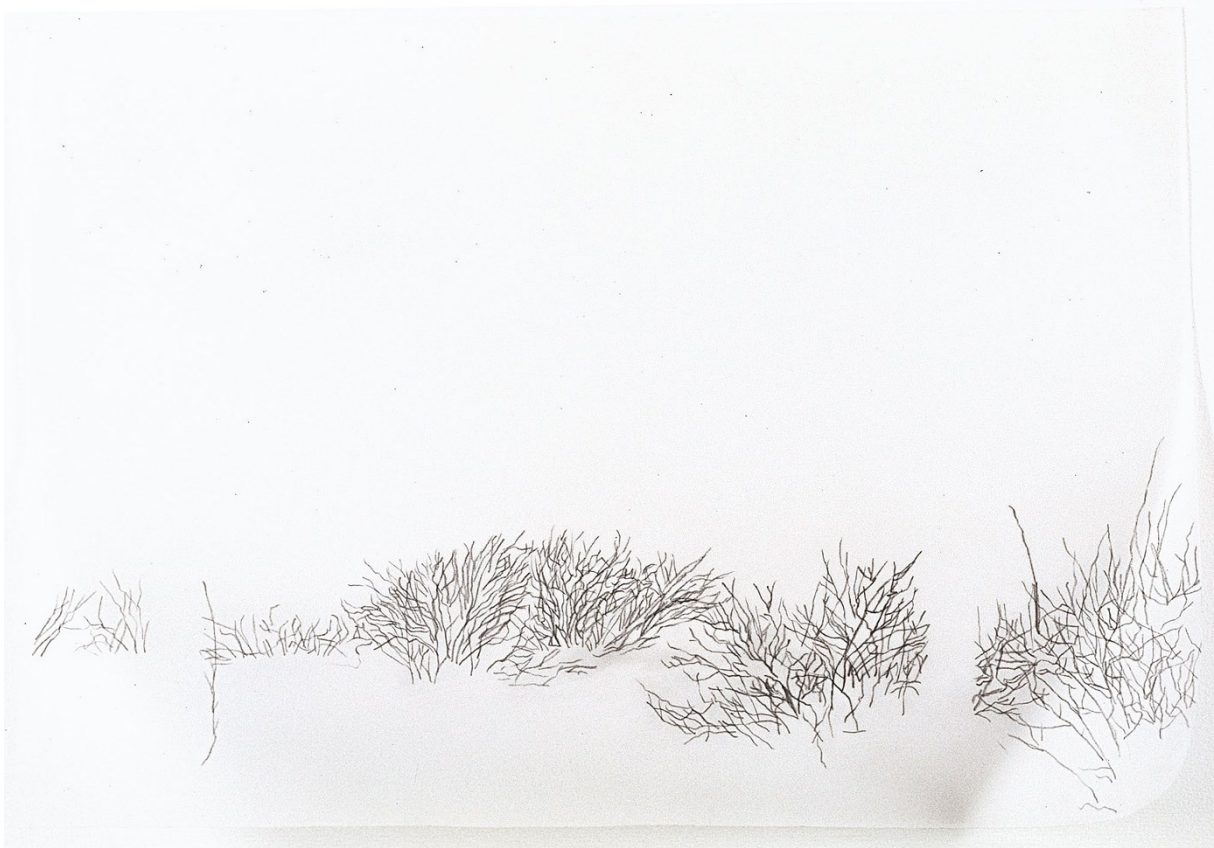


Figure 3. Shrubbery. Drawing. Vibeke Sjøvoll (2009/2021)

Life is about unlearning; we are piloted through what is considered to be different phases of life: "The individual never ceases passing from one closed environment to another, each having its own laws: first, the family; then the school ("you are no longer in your family"); then the barracks ("you are no longer at school"); then the factory; from time to time the hospital; possibly the prison, the preeminent instance of the enclosed environment." (Deleuze, 1992, p. 3). We were happy that we had stopped the drawing and writing; the drawing and writing belonged to another phase, the phase of childhood. The mad drawings and writings, raw, performative, twisted, the hidden exposed in lavish ways: the bloody sun, a monstrous man (father?), birds that could fly us away, flowers as high as skyscrapers, things that could be seen from at least two sides at the same time. Drawing and writing slowed us down. To spend time on drawing and writing made us lag behind the others. We replaced the drawings with flow charts, process descriptions, arrows, lines, axes and arcs on diagrams or drew the already thought in plan drawings. Illustrations. The only sentences we let slip through were sentences that could be taken for other people's

sentences. Sentences that could have been written by people we wanted to look like, to be. *I want curly hair, more marked abdominal muscles, a dog.*

For a long period, the urge to draw and write was weak, almost gone. We were a bit like people who have quit smoking; at some point many of them begin to wonder about the strange power the habit of smoking had over them. They begin to think that those who still smoke look stupid. But one night they light a cigarette, then one more the next evening. They have started to smoke again. But often they try to keep it a secret: no, I don't smoke; I did, but then I quit. Lately we have begun to give in to our longing for writing and drawing. We have begun to smuggle small bits and pieces of writing and drawing into our work. Passages of writing hidden within the academically sound; the arguments, the examples, the comparisons; drawings camouflaged as illustrations; fig.1, fig.2, fig. x. We must remove most of it, the surroundings have a keen eye for the deviant, for tendencies towards nonsense. We do as we are told, we are all too happy to be published, and so are our employers, we delete words, sentences, paragraphs, we remove traces of writing and strengthen the representative efforts in our sentences and paragraphs. But fragments of writing sometimes pass the keen eyes of reviewers and editors, some of them have a soft spot for the poetic, small dribs and drabs of something soft, humane, spontaneous. It is as if they are thinking that true confidence lies in making small and tasty concessions for the quirky, the personal, like in the use of beauty spots in the old days. Conformity preys on a touch of the disturbing. The imperfect guarantees authenticity.



Figure 4. Drawing dialogue. Drawing on wall. Yngvild Færøy and Vibeke Sjøvoll. (2009)

Vibeke: Failing to write like somebody else.

I tried to learn academic writing. I failed to write like someone else, failed to write like someone who was freed from her own nagging questions and resistance.

Starting to draw was to allow myself to search again, feel again, to wonder, shiver, fail and search again. 'Cixous exhorts her readers to write with one hand and experience pain with the other: "with one hand, suffering, living, putting your finger on pain, loss. But there is the other hand: the one that writes: feel with one hand write with the other"' ((Cixous (1977) in Lie, 2005, p. 3). And this is how it worked for me: when I started to draw, my writing became different. The difference has to do with the tentative, the suggestive, the unstable, the insecure which the process of drawing consists of for me. The space that the drawings create, the way I see it is a space for the *not sure*; I feel I don't have to pretend to be sure about something and the drawings are never really finished; they are a continuation of drawings past and beginnings of drawings to come.

In writing academic texts, the demand for closure or something stable, measurable, is overwhelming. Drawings and lines can of course be certain, seductive, full of movement and life. Still, the particular quality or fault with my way of drawing is that they are full of doubt, tentative, vague even; the doubting is maybe seductive too, but I think it is also annoying, disturbing, something that stands in the way of finishing on the one hand and that favours movement or blurring on the other. 'The thing about things, however, is that they *occur* – that is, they carry on along their lines. This is to admit them into the world not as nouns but as verbs, as goings-on', writes Ingold in *The Life of Lines* (Ingold, 2015, p. 16). When I draw, I search for possible relationships, connections, or extensions of what occurs on the paper, in the photograph, on the wall, in the world.

My uncertainty about starting to draw (again) relates to an old idea (which I have absorbed) that artistic practice is about the artist's inner world; drawing is about subjective experience and cannot be considered as intellectual or abstract thinking. Abstract thinking is the trademark of proper research. Dewey points out that, in the period of the Academy's founding "the aristocratic tradition which looked down upon material things and upon the senses and the hands was still mighty" (Dewey, 1930, p. 329 in McGuirk, 2013, p. 2). I think that this fear of the irrelevance of drawing is

visible in the drawings themselves; different levels of fear, uncertainty, modesty; the creation of them bears witness to my relationship with drawing in this context: ambivalence, lack of faith, growing faith, never quite sure, minor experiments. “The drawing is more than a result of seeing. It is a seeing that doubts itself, and, beyond that, doubts the world of man. Born of doubt in the act of perception”(Taussig, 2011). The drawings do not illustrate the process, the processes are visible in them, the drawings are wounds, despair, hopes; some of them are barely visible, others are more distinct. The drawings are also cracks, rifts; they make that which tends to be hidden in the shadows visible in ways that are hard to control. That is the danger of drawing.



Figure 5. Wicker chairs. Drawing. Vibeke Sjøvoll. (2021)

Geir: Punching keys on a keyboard, touching a tomato

It is only the tips of my fingers that touch the keyboard when I write. She uses her body to draw, to make. My fingers repeat a small repertoire of movements. I reach

letter 'Y' by stretching out the index finger, the letter 'Å' by moving my little finger diagonally up to the left. I separate the words with the help of my right thumb. The letters that make their way to the screen are not affected by how I touch the keyboard.

Her hands are always probing the surfaces of the things she touches, the steering wheel of the car, the knife, the knitting needles and the yarn, the pencil, the tomato, the hammer. I can see how her fingers acquaint themselves with the objects, weigh them, determine the resistance in them, find out how she can use them according to the possibilities they offer. Her ways offer an infinity of connections, or a continuum, between the mundane and the sacred. When I write, my movements are restricted to pulsating between ON and OFF. Like an electronic device.

Vibeke: Drawing as a way of thinking

Lines, marks, lead to other lines and marks that were not in my mind to begin with, it is a way of both discovery and creation. 'Deleuze's creation of concepts is connected to art, since the main goal of these concepts is to *make* phenomena and processes *visible* rather than representing things that already exist' (Schmidgen, 2015, p. 144). If the act of drawing is connected to a 'manner of thinking' and if the premise for drawing to take place is that it is connected to the drawing tools and surface (pens and paper), hands and eyes and imagination, then its quality is situated ('situated cognition'), then thinking (drawing) 'is not something that happens in a mind, as an attribute or quality that belongs to a subject who is isolated from the world; it is an activity or event in the world (Gallagher, 2009, pp.38–39 in McGuirk, 2013, p. 5). Being in the world is forgetting the world.

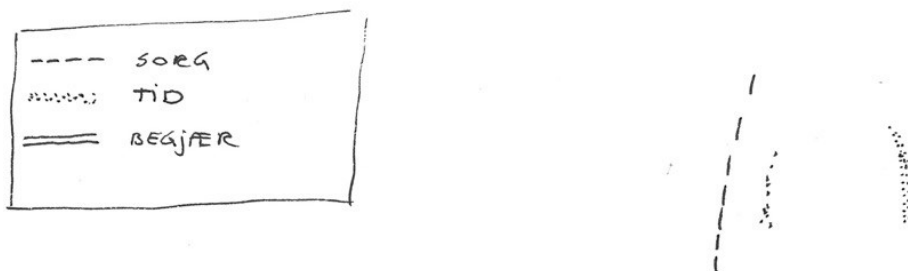


Figure 6. Sign explanation: 'sorg': sorrow, 'tid': time, 'begjær': passion. Drawing. Vibeke Sjøvoll. (2020)

In the interview *How Like a Leaf* (1999) Donna Haraway talks about 'worldly practice'. As I interpretate worldly practice, it is a way of exploring the world through the relationship between things, bodies, and meanings in our environments. The point of worldly practice is to enable us to describe the world in new ways. Descriptions need constant renewal 'to redescribe something so that it becomes thicker than it first seems' (Haraway, 1999, p. 106). This makes up for the creation of new epistemological starting points. I feel that we need this kind of new grounding – one that avoids the often-automatic use of sedimented abstractions – to make it possible to make use of 'objects as frozen stories' (p. 106). This, the attempt to redescribe, to make things thicker than the sedimented abstractions, is something I attempt to do, though on a small scale and with emphasis on tangible and playful explorations and making practice.

Drawing allows or gives space for other sensitivities and possibilities than what writing alone does. Both drawing and looking at drawings create possibilities for associations and understandings that are linked to its own specific form: drawing.

Geir: Writing things white

Thoughts are invisible, they appear to be immaterial. You cannot see them, they do not make a sound of their own, even the ones that make one jump in terror. They appear and disappear, often without comprehensible traces. It is as if they never were there in the first place. This is maybe especially so for the unfamiliar ones, the ones that we are not able to recognise as ours, as something that it is appropriate for us to think, thoughts without the right form; the smallest of thoughts, the fastest, the shyest.

Words on paper, or on a screen, are different in this respect. They stay, no matter how small or insignificant they may be. They have acquired a material form, or at least an electronic one, we must erase them to make them go away, strike through them, delete them with the delete key available to us on the keyboard of the computers provided to us, burn or shred the paper they are written on. However, all is kept within the computer, every keystroke, every word, every act of deleting letters, words, sentences, paragraphs, drafts, books. You must overwrite the hard drive several times to get rid of the traces of your keystrokes, and even then, they continue to exist elsewhere, in servers, in different parts of the material structure we tend to call 'the cloud'. Our keystrokes are spread all over, bits and pieces here, fragments there, like tiny droppings from a strange future species.

Geir: A modest man; inspired

There is not much trouble with me. I pretend to be a modest man. The pretence of modesty is part of what it is to be me. The pretence is both pretentious and not at all. To pretend is a game that was burned into my flesh from a young age. The pretence produces the kind of writing I am capable of, the kind of writing that comes in certain qualities, in certain quantities. The pretence of modesty keeps me from doing – and writing – things that can get me into trouble. There is not much trouble with me. The little trouble I make is trouble in ciphers. This makes me a likable man, a likable colleague. Not necessarily a likable human, a decent human, a responsible one. My modesty makes me a hanger-on.

The fact that I write makes the effects of my choices, my lack of choosing, visible. The writing is witnessing me. The writing looks back at me. I burn the writing.

There are notable differences between what I write to myself and the writing that ends up as texts I make available to others. But more important than the differences are the similarities; all the texts are texts that desert something. I cannot stand witnessing the words that I have left behind; they bear witness to betrayal; I betray the things I am writing about; I betray myself by writing in the manner I do.

I never feel the shame of betrayal before it is too late. This is so, even though I tend to procrastinate in almost absurd ways, write painfully slow, and read the sentences repeatedly as I write them. I have all the time in the world to recognise what I am doing, stop doing it, do it differently. I dream of writing sorrow, not writing about sorrow, but to write sorrow. I pursue sorrow.

I want to write like she does. Sometimes Vibeke writes sentences that she shares with me. The sentences she shares are beginnings, she says, first sentences. They are, she says, ideas, openings. Some of them are statements about something, thoughts about something. Others are descriptions of situations or descriptions of movements within sparingly described surroundings. Someone says or does something. They can also be memories: 'My mother liked going to the sales'. I am best at beginnings, she says. I don't see them as such. They lack nothing, they are endings, too. She often draws thin lines. I have to put on my reading glasses to be able to see the lines. Her lines make parts of the world which otherwise would go

unnoticed, visible. There is nothing declamatory about her words, her lines. I long to understand her secret ways. She will tell me that there are no secret ways, no ways at all. I want my writing to be thinner, smaller, almost invisible. I want to be like her.

My project was about the encounters between humans and art institutions, the examples were to be from museums that exhibited contemporary art. The contemporary does not have much history; its lack of history makes it more difficult to place the artworks within the already known. To get to know the encounters, I had to expose myself to them, be a witness to them, get in contact with the humans who encountered, while they were encountering, after they had encountered. I was in the middle of this work. I was desperate. I took my mother to a museum. I spied on her, tried to write about her:

Mother

A lady at the museum. She never loosened her grip on the strap of her small shoulder bag. Slowly moving around the artworks. Norwegian paintings: detailed grand landscapes, waves, cornfields, waterfalls, scattered miniature human figures. Now and then she tilts her head as if to wrest some diagonal meaning out of the canvases. Never head-on, always off-centre. As if she is not allowed to do this, my mother.

The poetry of the new

Our ambition was to research, to become researchers. Our efforts produced enormous amounts of events. We did not know what to do with the increasing pile of documented reality: people, movements, sounds, sentences, walls, imaginations, smells, artworks, echoes, floors, ceilings, light, the sun and wind outside, the artificial climate inside, the currents of air. We thought we knew what we were doing, were trying to do, but we did not. The confusion made us start reading books and articles that themed methods, methodology, that were about qualitative research.

The articles we read were about a lot of different things: atmospheres (Anderson, 2009; Bøhme, 2013; Ellis, Tucker and Harper, 2013; Forrest, 2013; Bille, Bjerregaard, and Sørensen, 2014; Fox, 2015, Pink, Mackley, and Morosanu, 2014), the effects of architecture (Jones and MacLeod, 2016), buildings, events and feelings (Rose, Degen and Basdas, 2010), the social life of methods (Savage, 2013), neoliberal affects (Anderson, 2016), vibrational affect (Gershon, 2013), movement

(Manning, 2014), listening (Bennett, Cochrane, Mohan and Neal, 2015), affect (Doss, 2009) ordinary affects (Stewart, 2007), stillness (Buser, 2017), children with stones in their pockets (Rautio, 2013), how to relate to the writing of a thesis (Cleave, Bridges-Rhoads, and Hughes, 2018), writing a thesis differently (Honan, 2016), writing a rhizome (Honan, 2007), the poetics of distractions (Coles, 2018), absence (Frers, 2013), sensory experience (Degen and Rose, 2012), sonic geographies (Gallagher and Prior, 2014), autoethnography (Denzin, 2006; Ellis, 2011; Lapadat, 2017), walking interviews (Jones, Bunce, Evans, Gibbs, and Hein, 2008; Evans and Jones, 2011; Ramsden, 2016), video research (Frers, 2009), sounding ruins, sonic methods (Gallagher, 2015; 2019), making the familiar strange (Gurevitch, 1988; Mannay, 2010), post-critical writing (Henderson, 2018), haptic writing (Rotman, 2002), talk as a bad predictor (Jerolmack and Khan, 2014), the sonic geography of voice (Kanngieser, 2012), assemblage and critical urbanism (McFarlane, 2011), thinking data with Deleuze (Mazzei, 2010), overflows in research (Millei and Rautio, 2017), Deleuzio-Guattarian cartography (Taguchi and Palmer, 2014), visual writing (Ulmer and Koro-Ljungberg, 2015), ruins, (DeSilvey and Edensor, 2012), writing (Richardson and St. Pierre, 2005) art as a problem for post-qualitative research (Rousell, 2019), new empiricism (St. Pierre, 2016), post-reflexivity and post-intentional phenomenology (Vagle and Hofsess, 2016), and the spectral (Wylie, 2007).

The articles were different from each other, sometimes spectacularly so, but at the same time they were similar in ways that it took us a while to comprehend. They were about different things, things we did not know it was possible to write about in settings like these: the sounds of traffic, the atmospheres of shopping malls, the ghostly effects of surveillance, the evocative powers of absence, things that circulate in the oceans, wood, plastic, sorrows, children playing with sticks. Some of them were about how to write research, how to write differently, many of them insisted on making use of the evocative potential of language.

Many of these articles had parts that were different, poetic parts, parts where they succeeded in making things and events shine for a second, a minute. But these parts were also very elegant, like they had been written over and over again, hundreds of times, they shone like polished metal, like lacquered pebbles. The shiny parts were inserted pieces on otherwise grey, hard, even hostile surfaces. Like isolated incidents of decorated tiles in white sterile rooms. Many of them were close-ups of some kind or another, descriptions, reflections, slow, thorough, pockets of silence and slowness in otherwise smooth, lean and effective performances. We were seduced by them,

moved, touched. Impressed too, intimidated even. But we also knew that we never would be able to achieve the same, to do the same.

It is probably reasonable to see this expanding unfolding of diversity, in terms of form and content, as an answer to something we have hoped for; an opening up for the other, other things to write about, other forms of research writing. If we think it is so, then the new forms of writing, the new things we are free to write about, represent more freedom; the subjective, the hidden, the marginal, may finally be a part of, even play an important part in, science and research. If that is so, we may even consider it a kind of a victory; things and sentiments that were regarded as too unimportant, too small are now being smuggled into the scientific world by a new breed of researchers. In other words, if it is so, then these texts suggest that the academic world is changing for the better because of inventive resistance from researchers.

But that may not be all that can be said about this, maybe not even everything that should be said: the academic world is enmeshed in the rest of the world. The world has been moving in a neoliberal direction for decades. The neoliberal has been the new black for as long as we can remember. The neo in neoliberal is more neo than we are able to comprehend. The substance of research is under multiple attacks, one of them is the obsession with numbers, with counting; the content of our writings is of limited interest in the neoliberal context. The most interesting thing about our thoughts and efforts is their potential for being turned into something that it is possible to count and trade. The most countable of the things we do are the things we publish. So, we write. We write about anything, our writing expands into the duskier parts of the world, the more private, all kinds of phenomena and causes. We invest with words, they invest, we all invest, we become investors.



Figure 7. Greenness. Photo with drawing. Geir Grothen and Vibeke Sjøvoll. (2021)

Geir: The climate is changing.

The trees of the south were overwhelming. Their size, their greenness. We came in August when the leaves were at their greenest, as dark green as they get before they start to die. Some of the branches of some trees, mostly ash, were darker and smoother, marked by children climbing in them. I, too, climbed those trees, perched on their branches, looked through their foliage towards the sun.

The climate of the south is moving north. Trees are growing in places where before there was only grass and willow. Their stems and branches are thicker, their leaves bigger. The houses are getting bigger too, the dwellings, hotels, conference centres, museums, hospitals. Universities. The roads have been straightened out, the tunnels widened, the ferries electrified. They have begun to refer to the sea as a field to harvest from. The waters are full of farmed fish. Billions are made, golf courses built. Habits from the south, from the world.

The north is a spectre for me now, I am haunted by the north. The north has gone underground within me, work from behind the scenes, disrupts, disturbs.

An end of some sort

This text was maybe an attempt to remember who we were, to remember that which we constantly are encouraged to forget, an attempt to 'undo the main effects that this system has upon its minority subjects: wilfully instilled amnesia, symbolic misery, lack of self-representation' (Braidotti, 1996, p. 312). To remember, even more so in trying to remember things we want to forget, opens the multitude of voices stuck within us. Some of them are muffled, silenced, weak, or faint. Others are loud and clear, repeating messages from an outer world. Some voices, perhaps most of them, are caught between the half-repressed, almost dumb and those who make themselves known when we feel safely conform to our surroundings. We tend to recognise the voices and memories as ours. The writing of this text has made us aware that the multitude of voices that reside within us and traverses through us are not solely ours. It is perhaps better to think of them as ghostlike guests; the voices enter, influence us, bring joy, a sense of belonging, or torment us, bringing with them a sense of separation, of us being alone and vulnerable. Then they leave or go silent. To return again.

To draw is also not to write: Writing is the obvious thing to do in settings like this, in academic contexts. But, not writing, to draw, to sense, act and think by other means than by writing, is to disturb the habitual, override the expected, and create different kinds of openings. To draw suspends the processes and makes them slower; drawing offers a kind of otherness connected to the body. The brain chooses the letters that the tips of our fingers transfer to the machines; the lines we draw are connected to our bodies; they change as our life changes; the generous lines of the child, the shivering lines of the elderly, the nervous line, the confident line. Drawing

leaves room for things “other than words” (Haseman, 2006, p. 103); it slips away from our conventional word-oriented ways of dealing with the world and its events.

To write with two hands, as Cixous puts it, is to feel the pain, endure the choir of voices mumbling, telling us about our lives, the life, and write. Both at the same time.

About the authors

Vibeke Sjøvoll is working as an artist/teacher/researcher at the Department of Product Design at Oslo Metropolitan University. She has studied at the Norwegian Academy of Fine Arts and has a master's degree in fine art from the Glasgow School of Art. Professional interests include site-specific art practices, critical and speculative design and the materiality and performativity of everyday situations. Her research include practise led research in education, artistic and performative research.

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